

Urgent action needed on eradicating BVD

SUCCESSFUL BVD eradication schemes in Europe and, more recently, in the Republic of Ireland and Scotland, mean attention is now shifting to England and Wales to tackle the disease.

With Bovine Viral Diarrhoea estimated to cost the British livestock sector £40m a year, farmers can no longer afford to ignore the problem.

Action is all the more important as the Scottish Government plans to impose movement restrictions on all persistently infected (PI) animals from February next year – including those which cross the Border from the North of England.

Many farmers already adopt BVD management strategies as part of herd health and cattle health schemes.

Now Fearing, in conjunction with the SAC, has launched a “Tag and Test”

service that allows farmers to take tissue samples from newborn calves and identify PI animals within only a few days.

George Caldow, SAC veterinary manager and BVD expert, said: “By making it easy to integrate testing with a routine process such as tagging newborn calves, farmers and their vets can collect essential data to help decision-making when tackling the problem of persistently infected animals in their herd.”

The Geno tags collect a sample of ear tissue in a hermetically sealed, tamper-proof container with a unique identifier to ensure full traceability.

The samples are sent by post to the SAC laboratories for analysis and the results are returned within five working days to both the farmer and his vet.

“The prevention, treatment and management of

this disease at farm level is complex, but early identification of PI calves has a crucial part to play,” said Colin Lindsay, of Capontree Vets in Brampton.

“Even when the problem has been successfully tackled, we still need to establish an ongoing monitoring procedure that is simple and cost-effective to farmers.”

The Fearing Geno tag is available as part of a ministry-approved pair and the cost to farmers is £5.99 including the BVD test. The tag can also be purchased without the test.

Andrew Cowan, Fearing general manager, said: “This technology supports a huge range of genotyping and diagnostic testing, and because samples can be stored safely without refrigeration, they can be used by vets, breed societies and trade bodies for a variety of purposes.”